

Asheville City Council
Planning and Economic Development Committee

11:30 a.m., September 17, 2008
Economic Development Office Conference Room

Minutes

Present: Councilwoman Robin Cape, Chair; Vice-Mayor Jan Davis

Staff: Gary Jackson, Sam Powers, Stephanie Monson, Chief Greg Grayson, Sasha Vrtunski

Guests: Robbie Sweetser, Mark Hoping, Jack Saye, Carol Stangler, Mary Olsen

The Planning and Economic Development Committee met on September 17, 2008, at 29 Haywood Street at 11:30 a.m. Chair Robin Cape called the meeting to order.

1. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes from the August 20, 2008, meeting were approved as written.

2. Updates

4th Quarter Economic Development

Sam Powers, Economic Development Director, gave the update by discussing the powerpoint presentation, Economic Development 07-08 Q4 (see supporting documents).

He also handed out an article published by the Milliken Institute, "Best Performing Cities 2008." This article listed Asheville as number 57 of the best performing large cities in 2008. This article can be read in its entirety at www.millikeninstitute.org.

3. Status Reports

Downtown Master Plan

Ms. Sasha Vrtunski, Project Manager, gave the report. The Advisory Committee met on September 8 to review the draft proposal developed by Goody Clancy, consultants on the project. The Advisory Committee voted to take more time to review the plan before it goes out to the public. They expect comments back from the consultants next week, and to start working in small groups by the end of September/beginning of October. They hope to have the draft proposal ready to present to Council by the end of October.

A follow-up meeting with the African-American community was held on September 15. Thanks to efforts of the event coordinator, Brenda Mills, Minority Business Program Coordinator for the city, the evening was well-facilitated, well structured, and was attended by a good cross-section of the public.

City Owned Property RFP

Mr. Sam Powers, Economic Development Director, gave the report.

Eagle Market Street site: Eagle Market Street Development Corporation (EMSDC) and the selected developer, Eagle Market Renaissance, LLC, are currently finalizing an Exclusive Negotiations Right (ENR) document, which will assist the developer with discussions with potential lending institutions. The City will review and sign the ENR. EMSDC and the developer are also drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which will include terms of sale and milestones for development. The city is not a party of the MOU but is assisting EMSDC in drafting the MOU. The redevelopment project is ultimately an agreement between the Eagle Market Street Development Corporation and the developer, Eagle Market Renaissance, LLC. The City is helping with the negotiations. Another key issue still under review is the State Historic Preservation (SHPO) review that is required under Section 108 guidelines.

Haywood Street/Civic Center site: The City received a revised letter of intent from McKibbin Hotel Group on September 12. McKibbin Hotel Group is proposing to purchase the Haywood Street site for \$2.3 million, and construct a Westin Element Hotel with 130 guest rooms, approximately 9200 square feet of retail and office space, and 130 parking spaces. The project has been reduced to seven (7) levels. A meeting with representatives from the Basilica, the city and the developer will move forward to discuss a possible public space on the triangle of land at Page Avenue and Haywood Street.

Aston Gateway Property: City staff has developed an internal team to look at master planning the Aston Gateway site with a goal of developing more density on the site and exploring the expansion of the site to include other possible partners for providing workforce housing, including the Housing Authority and State Employee Credit Union Foundation. Staff met with the Mountain Housing Authority (MHO) team last week, and will continue discussions on best methods to move forward.

4. New Business

Mr. Robbie Sweetser, representing the Common Sense at the Nuclear Crossroads Campaign, gave the presentation. The presentation concluded with Mr. Sweetser proposing that City Council approve an Ordinance to Prohibit the Transportation of high-Level Nuclear Waste within the City limits. Mark Hoping, Jack Saye, Carol Stangler, and Mary Olsen spoke in support of the ordinance. Chair Cape and Vice-Mayor Davis agreed that full Council should hear the presentation in order to consider the proposed ordinance.

5. Public Comment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.